



Bulgaria Spring Macro

Photographic tour with tour leader Ellie Rothnie

30th April to 7th May 2027

Trip Overview

Group size: The trip accommodates a maximum of 4 guests.

This includes: All transport in Bulgaria, accommodation, meals and house wine.

Cost excludes: International flights, sundry items and spirits/fine wines, tips for local guides/drivers and personal travel insurance.

Bulgaria is the undiscovered gem of Europe and offers astounding beauty and photographic opportunities. It is recognised as a concentrated hotspot for wildlife in southern Europe, and is one of the richest countries for herpetofauna, inhabited by an impressive 66 species including newts, frogs, lizards, and snakes. This makes it an ideal destination for this macro focussed trip in search of a vast array of reptiles and amphibians.

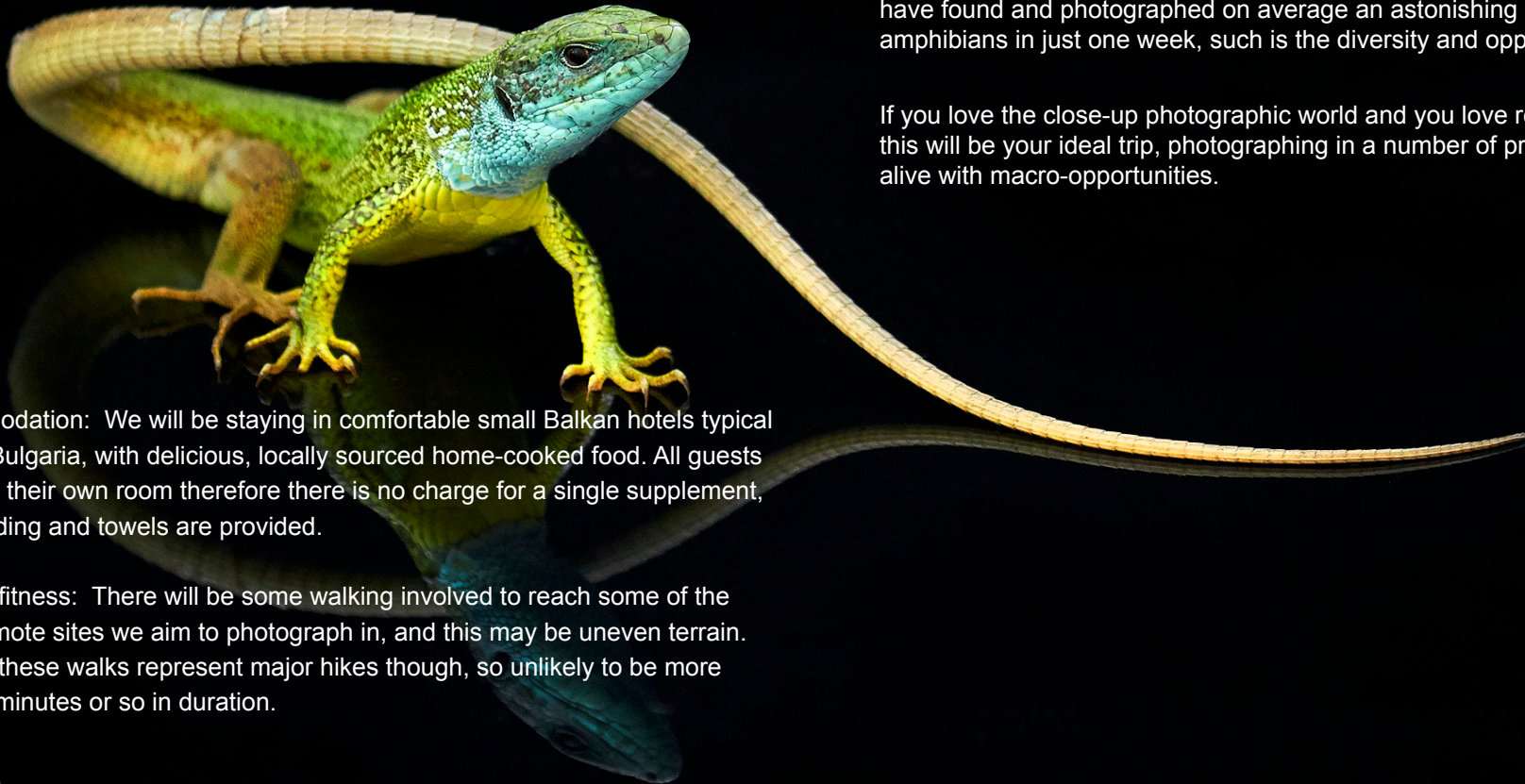
The trip takes place in two key locations, the Kresna gorge and the Rupite area, both fantastic parts of Bulgaria and home to more than 50% of the country's reptile & amphibian species. Such is the richness of the environment, there is also the chance to photograph a wide variety of flowers and insects too. On our previous trips here, we have found and photographed on average an astonishing 25 species of reptiles & amphibians in just one week, such is the diversity and opportunity that is available to us.

If you love the close-up photographic world and you love reptiles & amphibians, then this will be your ideal trip, photographing in a number of protected environments that are alive with macro-opportunities.

Accommodation: We will be staying in comfortable small Balkan hotels typical of rural Bulgaria, with delicious, locally sourced home-cooked food. All guests will have their own room therefore there is no charge for a single supplement, and bedding and towels are provided.

Level of fitness: There will be some walking involved to reach some of the more remote sites we aim to photograph in, and this may be uneven terrain. None of these walks represent major hikes though, so unlikely to be more than 30 minutes or so in duration.

LEVEL 2



Itinerary



Day 1: We are due to arrive at Sofia Airport at roughly the same time, where we will be met by our Bulgarian guide, Dr. Miroslav Slavchev. Miro is one of Bulgaria's most respected and eminent herpetologists, and he will be travelling and photographing with us throughout the trip. He is attached to the Institute of Biodiversity and Ecosystem Research, Academy of Science in Sofia and has scientific permission to catch and handle all species of reptiles and amphibians. We will travel to our first base in the Kresna gorge, where we will check in and enjoy an evening meal. Over dinner we will discuss what to expect over the coming days and hints and tips will be provided. As an expert in reptiles and amphibians, Miro will also give an overview and share personal insights into the species that we will be photographing. (We will send out the flight recommendations nearer the time).

Days 2 - 4: The Kresna gorge will be our base for the first half of the workshop. This spectacular gorge was formed by the Struma River which sculpted a 16-kilometre-long canyon, and because of this formation, the area is characterized by a transitional-Mediterranean climate which is the reason for the great variety of plant and animal species typical for a Mediterranean region. We will be out early to find and photograph species that should include the Nose-horned viper, Dice snake, Aesculapian snake, large whip snake, Caspian whip snake, and Montpellier snake. We will also be looking for several types of lizards, including the colourful green lizard and Wall lizard, and the Spur-thighed tortoise and Herman's tortoise, both endangered but common in this part of SW Bulgaria and protected by Natura 2000. Because of the nature of the photography and type of species, we will provide you with the best macro-opportunities, tuition and information about the species that we are photographing. After a late breakfast at the hotel, we will continue to concentrate on looking for species typical of this special area, and we will take a picnic lunch with us so that we can stay out in the field. We also have the option of aquarium photography should we experience bad weather. After a good day's photography, we will return to our hotel for dinner, relaxation, and the chance to review the day's images with informal workshops on image processing. We will discuss the work that we've done during the day and the plan for the next day.

Itinerary

Later in the evening after dinner, for anyone interested, we will have several opportunities for night-time scouting where we will be looking for the Leopard snake (the most beautiful and one of the rarest snakes in Europe), Kotschy's gecko, the Eastern spadefoot toad, the Marsh frog, and the Tree frog; these species are much easier to find in the evening. Just hearing the Frog Chorus is a memorable experience!

Days 5 - 7: We will make our way to the village of Melnik in the sub-hills of the Pirin Mountains, and to our comfortable accommodation which will be our home for the next three days. This will be the ideal base to explore the protected area of Rupite, the crater of an extinct volcano and situated next to the smallest mountain in Bulgaria – the Kozhuh mountain. Almost all the snake species that can be observed in Bulgaria can be found in Rupite, as well as species of tortoises and terrapin, and other animals that prefer relatively higher temperatures. Our days here will follow a very similar pattern as before; looking for species such as the Balkan Pond terrapin, Red-eared slider, Spur-thighed & Hermann's tortoise, and species that should include the Aesculapian snake, large whip snake & Dahl's whip snake, and the Grass and Dice snakes. We will be making the most of the opportunities that this unique area has to offer. Again, after a good day's photography we will return to our hotel for a delicious dinner, relaxation, the chance to review the day's images, and chat through the plan for the following day. The beautiful natural sandstone pyramids of the area also make a stunning landscape setting and offer additional photographic opportunities.

Day 8: Due to the late flight, we will be able to do some extra photography in the morning. Then we will make the final journey back to Sofia Airport to catch our return flights home.



Things to bring

We will be staying in comfortable small Balkan hotels typical of rural Bulgaria, with delicious, locally sourced home-cooked food. Please let us know if you have any special dietary requirements.

In terms of clothing, the weather in Bulgaria during the Spring can be dynamic, ranging from 7-25 degrees centigrade. It may be chilly one day and become very warm with thundery showers the next. So that you can adapt your clothing to the Spring weather, we would recommend plenty of layers in terms of T-shirts, fleeces, a warm jacket, walking trousers and waterproof jacket & trousers. A good pair of strong, waterproof walking boots is essential as we will be walking every day over uneven ground.



Camera equipment

In terms of camera kit, you'll need your macro lens in the range of 100mm-180mm, and then some supplementary lenses for other opportunities such as a 24-70mm and a mid-range zoom such as a 100-400mm or 70-200mm. If you have a convertor, bring that too for additional flexibility. We do have bean bags available for the trip. If you have a cable release and angle view finder, bring those too. Because we will have the opportunity for night-time scouting, a head lamp or small torch will be a good addition to your packing list.



Useful Contact Information

My contact number for the build up to and for the duration of the trip is:

Ellie: +44 (0)7879 480143



Please don't hesitate to contact me even if you think it is a minor question, I am here to help.



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